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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 002318

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN: COUNSELOR COHEN DISCUSSES SECURITY WITH  
NSA DURRANI

REF: A. PESHAWAR 370  
[1](#)B. PESHAWAR 360  
[1](#)C. PESHAWAR 359

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister (and former ambassador to the U.S.) Mahmud Ali Durrani met with the Counselor of the Department of State, Dr. Eliot Cohen, and the Ambassador on June 25. In a warm and wide-ranging conversation, Durrani conveyed his views about the current state of militancy in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) as well as the political situation and the future of President Pervez Musharraf. Durrani stressed that the June 10 incident in Mohmand agency had provoked a very negative reaction within the Pakistani military and emphasized the need for heightened trust between Pakistan and the U.S., particularly between the two militaries. The Counselor expressed concern regarding the rapid spread of extremism in Pakistan and asked about GOP's plans to combat it. Duranni and Dr. Cohen also discussed the Frontier Corps (FC) and the possibilities for training. End Summary.

PAKISTAN ANGER OVER MOHMAND INCIDENT  
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[1](#)2. (C) Durrani described in detail the Pakistani version of the June 10 attack in Mohmand agency. (See reftels.) Durrani told the Counselor the Pakistan Army was "very upset" by the incident. The Counselor observed that the incident was now under investigation with the full participation of the Pakistani military. Durrani noted he had often stressed in Washington the need for both governments to take steps to build the level of trust.

COMBATING MILITANCY AND EXTREMISM  
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[1](#)3. (C) The Counselor shared his concern regarding the rapid spread of extremism in Pakistan and asked Durrani for his views on this. Durrani replied that the common man was not interested in "these religious people," but there were grievances among the tribes and "local agendas in the FATA and NWFP" which were contributing to unrest. Durrani also pointed out Pakistanis are aware of Afghanistan's problems with drugs, corruption, and lack of governance; they do not see the unstable situation in Afghanistan as entirely the

fault of a militant safe haven in Pakistan. Durrani referred to a statement which the Prime Minister had issued assigning responsibility to Kayani for action against militants. Durrani described his familiarity with the border area, noting he had been in Afghanistan during 9/11 and had previously served in the tribal areas.

¶4. (C) The Counselor pressed Durrani for a more detailed description of what steps the government was taking to control the security situation around Peshawar. Durrani acknowledged that there was no strategic plan for combating militancy in the border areas, but said he was developing one. Elements of the plan would include elections (presumably meaning greater integration of the FATA) and education. Dr. Cohen came back to the absence of a clear plan, observing that the Pakistanis seemed to have no theory of victory. He again urged the government to move against militancy quickly.

DURRANI: TIME FOR MUSHARRAF TO RETIRE  
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¶5. (C) Turning to the political situation, Durrani told the Counselor in confidence that he had delivered a message to President Musharraf that his popularity was declining and he should step down. Durrani said this had been painful given his long-standing friendship with Musharraf. In response to the Ambassador's question regarding whether Musharraf could stay in Pakistan should he choose to retire, Durrani said "I doubt it." Musharraf had made mistakes in recent years, observed Durrani, but would be remembered by history as a

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good leader. Durrani added that much of the recent drop in Musharraf's popularity was due to the economic situation. Economic growth had been consumer-led and had not encouraged any notable increases in productivity, so the economy had been particularly vulnerable to the external shocks of rising oil and food prices. Durrani said Musharraf was no longer playing a major role in government deliberations.

¶6. (C) Durrani also brought the Counselor up to date on the election disqualification of coalition partner and political rival Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), saying he was a "stubborn and vengeful man."

DURRANI DEFENDS FRONTIER CORPS  
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¶7. (C) The Counselor asked how understanding and trust between our countries could be enhanced. Durrani strongly agreed on the need for such trust. In Pakistan, he said, the United States and Pakistan were confronting a common threat on the western border, perhaps the most serious common threat in our history. There needed to be broader understanding of this threat in both countries. Durrani also noted there was the perception that Pakistan had been "dumped" by the United States in the past and this perception needed to be overcome. Durrani added that a settlement in the Middle East would also help.

¶8. (C) The Counselor asked about the possibility of improved training engagement, including possibly the training of Pakistanis at the U.S.-based Joint Readiness Training Center. Durrani said the Pakistani army was engaging in counterterrorism training but that it would help if the U.S. would expedite equipment deliveries.

¶9. (C) The Counselor said he was seeking Durrani's frank assessment of the Frontier Corps, pointing out there was a lot of skepticism in Washington about the FC, since they were from the tribal areas. There had also been incidents of FC assisting militants or at least turning a blind eye to their activities. The Counselor added that there was concern in Washington that the U.S. would merely be arming and equipping

a force that would then turn against us.

¶10. (C) Durrani asserted that these concerns were unfounded. He said the FC was a disciplined and organized force and had, in fact, been used by the British as paramilitary support for many years. He conceded that there would, of course, be natural sympathy for people living in tribal areas among the FC, but this connection made them better suited for combat in those areas than the army. He was sure that the troops could and would perform well if better equipped.

PATTERSON